



East African Immigrants *and*

PORTLAND METROPOLITAN AREA SCHOOLS



EAST AFRICA

*the easternmost region of
the African Continent,
variably defined by geography
or geopolitics*

Twelve Countries Commonly considered part of East Africa & their populations

	Burundi	9,511,330
	Comoros	752,438
	Djibouti	724,622
	Eritrea	5,647,168
	Ethiopia	85,237,338
	Kenya	39,002,772
	Rwanda	10,746,311
	Seychelles	84,476
	Somalia	9,832,017
	Sudan	41,087,825
	Tanzania	41,048,532
	Uganda	32,369,558

*Total Population
of the area* **234,956,562**

When the size and population of this area are considered in conjunction with the enormous diversity of languages spoken, religions practiced and ethnicities living in the region it is unsurprising to find that East African Culture is incredibly complex

Some major religions include: Roman Catholic, Muslim and Protestant



KENYA



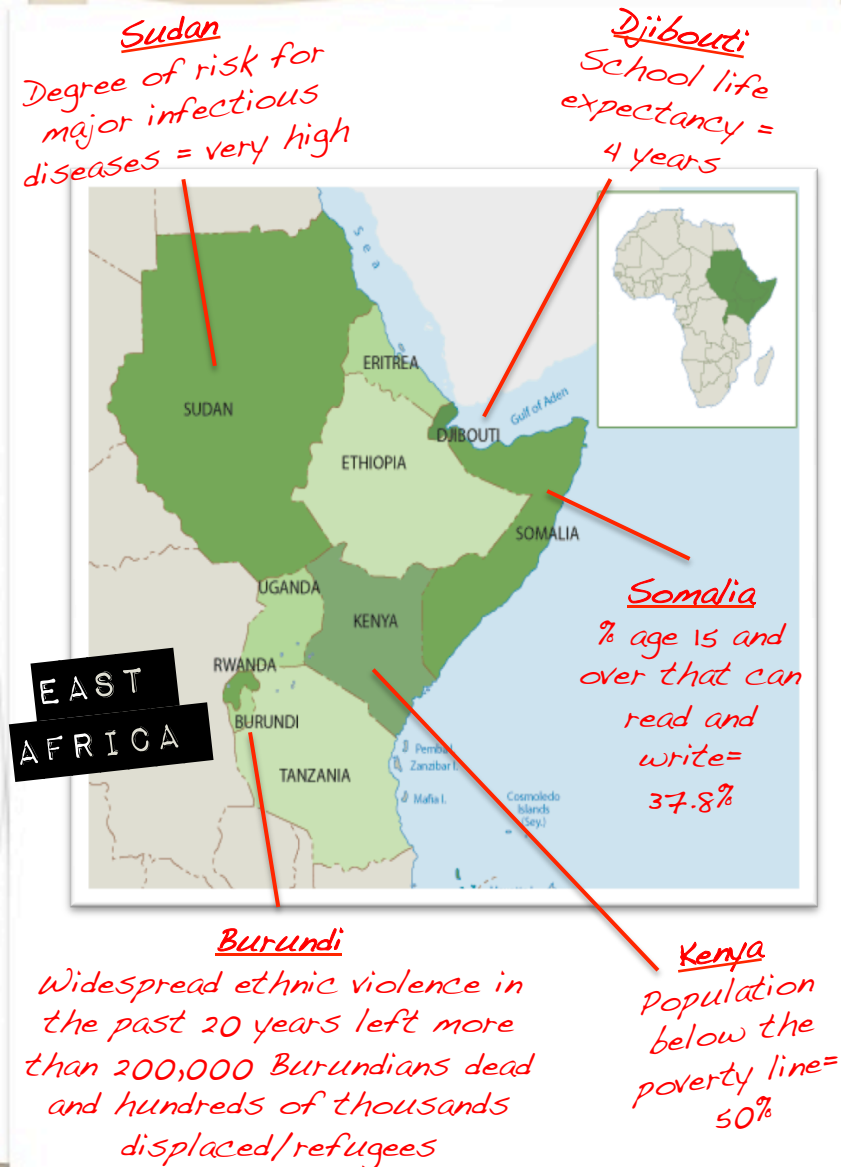
SUDAN

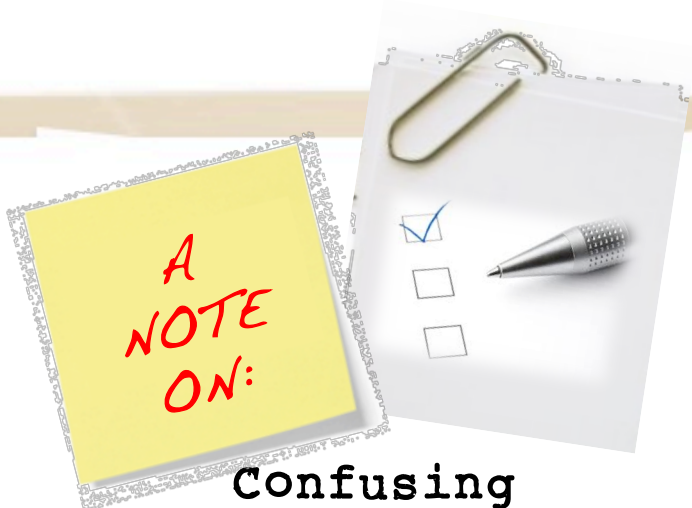
However, there are common issues which impact many East Africans and influence their pursuit of education both in Africa as well as after immigration to the United States.

Common Issues in East African Nations Include:

- High rates of poverty
- High degree of risk for major infectious diseases
- Low school life expectancy
- Low rates of literacy
- Political turmoil and Ethnic violence

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>





A
NOTE
ON:

Confusing (read: *Misleading*) Terminology

- What is considered "East African" immigration may not (and usually does not) reflect an even distribution of individuals from each of the twelve countries generally described as Eastern Africa.

- Information and statistics concerning this demographic are general and tend to reflect those countries with the highest number of immigrants in the U.S/Oregon.

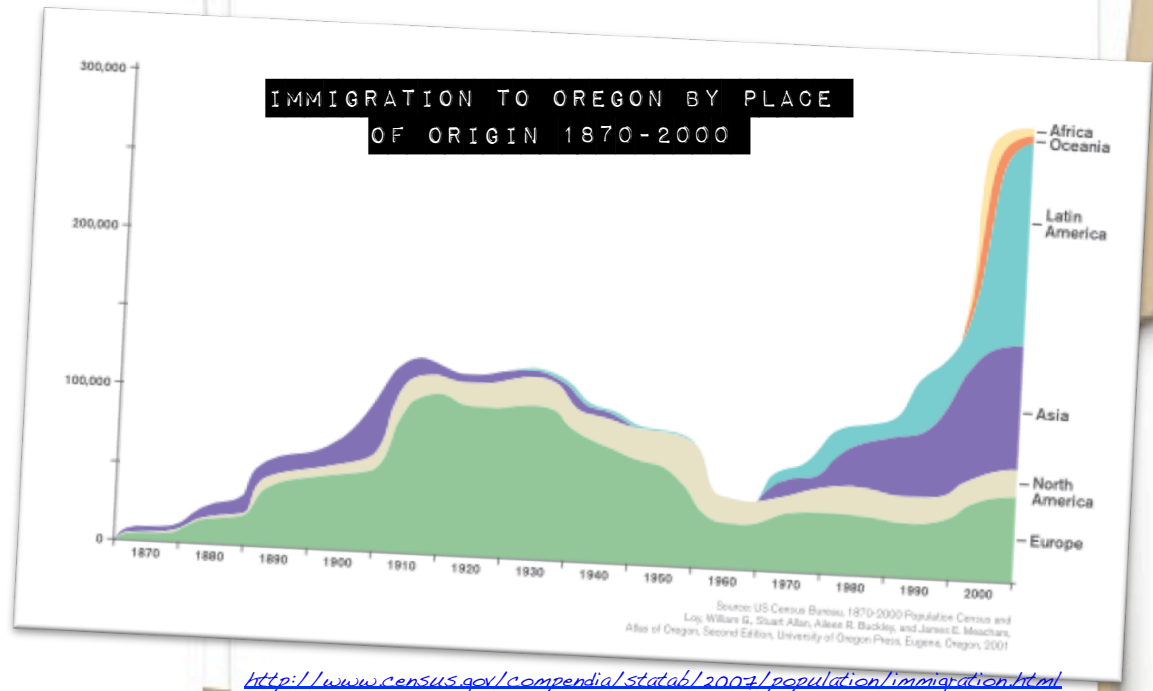
- General information and news, statistics, and recent/current history of the countries of origin suggest that Oregon receives the highest number of immigrants from the following countries: Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan and Eritrea.

Number of East African Immigrants Admitted into Oregon (2005)

<u>Country of Origin</u>	<u>Number of Immigrants</u>
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Ethiopia	143
Somalia	80
Kenya	30
Sudan	13
Eritrea	6

*Figures for Washington are significantly higher. Given our proximity, it is important to consider these numbers as well. For the same year, Washington received 630 immigrants from Ethiopia, 417 from Somalia, 151 from Kenya, 102 from Sudan, and 84 from Eritrea.



Addressing **WHEN** members of
this group arrived to the
Portland-Metro area



- There is no particular date when East African immigrants arrived to the U.S., Oregon, and finally to our local community.

*It did not
happen all
at once.*

- Depending on the context and experience of each different country, immigration has at times remained steady, other times decreased, and (in the case of several countries) increased greatly in recent years.

- Furthermore, statistics **DO NOT** inform us of how many immigrants from each Eastern African have made their way to the *Portland-Metro area*. Statistics, if available, tend to reflect Oregon as whole.

*WHEN?
Now!!! Eastern
African
immigration is
GROWING...*



• Somali immigration is growing. Manuel Valdes (Associated Press) explains that "nearly 260 Somalis have reached the U.S-Mexican border in the first eight months of . . . 2010, eclipsing the 240 who sought asylum the entire year before . . . The number of Somalis arriving at the border in 2009 was more than double that of 2008."

• A growing number of East African immigrants have, in recent years, used routes traditionally traveled by Latino immigrants:

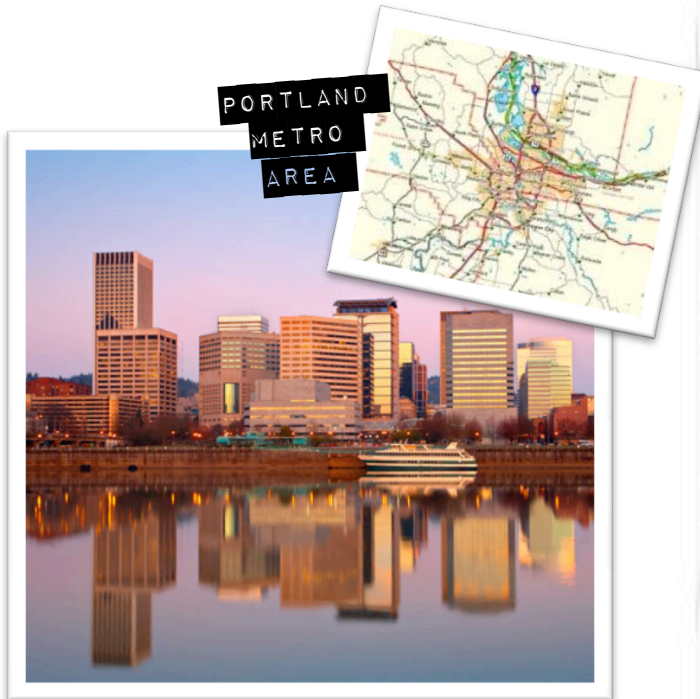
"East Africans have journeyed by air, sea and land to reach the United



States, taking them through routes in Mexico and Central America."

<http://www.thenewtribune.com/2010/06/14/1225970/somalis-await-asylum.html>

**WHERE
are East African
immigrant students
attending school in
the Portland metro
area?**



http://www.staffingoregon.com/listings_portland.html

- It is difficult to say with certainty, because districts do not have accurate statistics.

- Anecdotal information suggests many East African immigrants live and attend schools in east Portland and east Multnomah county.

- In the past few years, schools in PPS and in the David Douglas district have seen significant increases in the numbers of East African immigrant students, particularly students from Somalia.

WHAT school districts are doing to facilitate education of East African immigrant Students

- Districts help families access resources, not only within the district, but also in the county and community (i.e. food stamps, transportation assistance, etc)

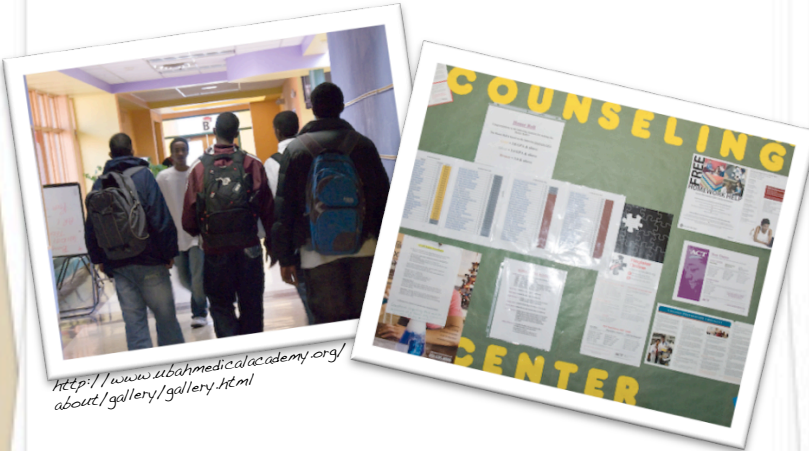


*Districts
provide ESL
assessment
and
placement.*

<http://relocationtoportland.com/all-schools-in-the-portland-oregon-school-district/>

- Somali language translation is available on some websites.
 - Other East African Languages are not readily available in district literature.
- PPS On-site translation services DO NOT include any East African languages.
- Other services, including high school completion counseling, TAG assessments, and translation services.
- David Douglas School District website is less explicit than PPS's website about how it serves immigrant students and families.

Accessing Services



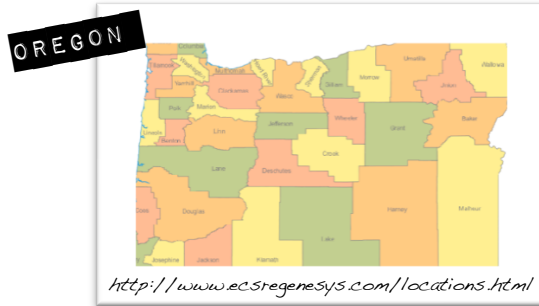
<http://www.ubahmedicalacademy.org/about/gallery.html>

PPS multilingual handbook makes reference to the fact that students and family members will be given information about their right to translation services, but makes no mention of how this right would be effectively communicated to someone who doesn't speak English.*

*<http://www.portlandschools.org/schools/multilingual/publications/PPS%20Multilingual%20Handbook%208-19-10.pdf>

To add to the difficulty level of accessing services, little to no mention is made in district literature of specific cultural barriers or how they are circumvented in the attempt to connect students and families with essential services. Because culture has enormous implications on how likely a family is to seek out services or information, it is extremely important that teachers, staff, and administrators keep this in mind when they interact with immigrant families.

The Oregon Department of Education



The Oregon Dept of Education's website lists its criteria for multicultural education, which include providing services which are "accessible and culturally relevant for all students, parents, and staff."*

*<http://www.ode.state.or.us>

The reality for East African immigrants, however, is likely quite far from this ideal, as demonstrated both by the difficulty our group faced in finding information about East African immigrants in Portland, and the further difficulty of finding country- and community-specific information ("East Africa" is a very diverse place, and immigrants from these countries reflect that diversity).





<http://www.uibahmedicalacademy.org/about/gallery/gallery.html>

In short...

schools and school districts make an effort to provide appropriate communication and services to all families

BUT...

delivery of services is NOT adequate to serve students and families from East African countries.



<http://www.eastafricans.org/newsletter.php>

Community Resources: IRCO and Africa House

In 2007, IRCO opened Africa House, which provides services and training to African refugees settling in Portland.*

*IRCO =
Immigrant and
Refugee
Community
Organization*

In addition to the services offered through African House, IRCO also helps connect immigrants and refugees with county services to which they may be entitled, such as food stamps or health benefits.**

* http://www.eastcountynews.com/news/story.php?story_id=117347138258673600
** <http://www.ircor.org/>

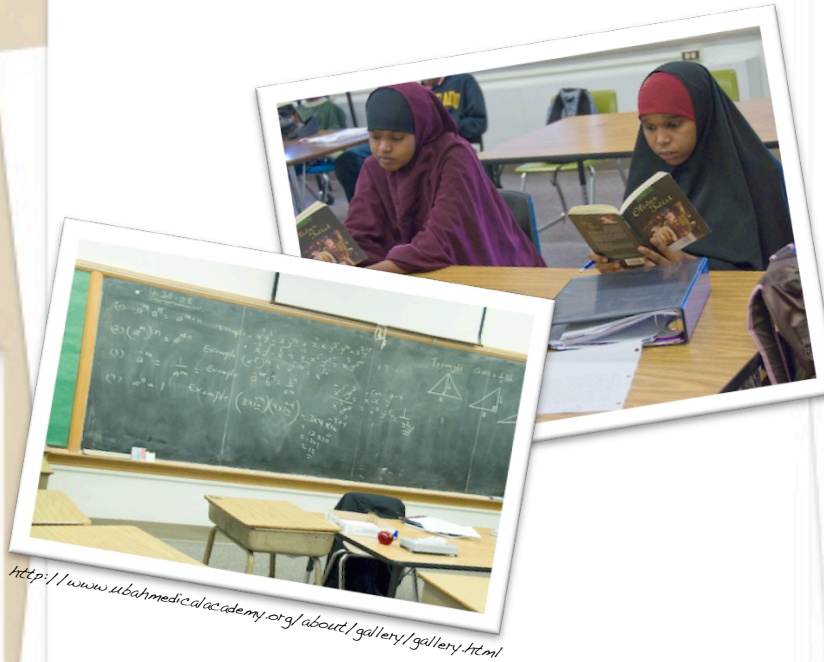
Importantly, Africa House also provides a way in which a diverse constituency can find common ground to advocate for themselves as a group.



ETHIOPIAN
IMMIGRANTS AT
AN IRCO EVENT



<http://www.ircor.org/about/faces-of-ircor/faces-of-ircor-ethiopia/>



Significant Barriers for East African Immigrants *In Schools*

- They don't speak English
- No specific resources for East African languages (Interpreters included)
- Cultural norms are not respected (clothes, prayer, etc.)
- Typically low socioeconomic status, which can lead to issues regarding proper nutrition, hygiene, and more.
- Difficult for East African immigrants to "fit in" with others, i.e. find a clique
- Their needs are not always addressed in teachers' curricula

Significant Barriers for East African Immigrants

*In the
Community*

- Lack of educational resources in the community and in the home
- National political and cultural rifts; the people of East Africa don't necessarily enjoy being lumped in with one another
- Language divide
- Poverty
- Health issues, including malnutrition, HIV, etc.

- People of East Africa have trouble with immersion into American society because of social differences (i.e. the role of women)

- Religious differences and lack of religious resources; additionally, the marginalization of Muslims creates feelings of isolation, confusion, anger, etc



<http://www.zibahmedicalacademy.org/about/gallery/gallery.html>

CONCLUSIONS

In attempting to find research related to East African immigrants, we were stunned and appalled by the lack of quality resources and concrete information available. The difficulty we, as graduate students who are well versed in research methods, have faced finding information about East African immigrants in the Portland area is indicative of the level of difficulty these immigrant communities encounter as they attempt to navigate not only the school system, but also the social services network.

Community resources like IRCO's Africa House are key to helping recent immigrants and their families access the cultural capital necessary to further their personal, educational, and professional goals. Hopefully as the numbers of East African immigrants continue to grow in the Portland metro area the quantity and quality of resources will expand as well.

Organizations devoted to providing culturally specific advocacy, information, referral and direct social services, such as the Washington Based East African Community Services (EACS), offer potential models for the development of future resources.



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